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✓ Latest release

Trade union membership

Trade union membership by employment and socio-demographic characteristics such as full-time/part-time, age, industry, occupation, education, earnings

Reference period August 2024

Released 9/12/2024

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Key statistics

In August 2024:

- 13.1% of employees (1.6 million) were trade union members in their main job, an increase on the 12.5% recorded in August 2022.
- Trade union membership was slightly more common amongst women (14%) than men (12%).
- The Education and training industry (27%) and the Professionals occupation group (20%) had the highest rates of trade union membership.
- Since 1992, the proportion of employees who were trade union members has fallen from 40%.

Other topics

Statistics from the [Characteristics of Employment \(/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/characteristics-employment-australia/latest-release\)](#) survey are also published in three other topic-based releases:

- [Employee earnings \(/statistics/labour/earnings-and-work-hours/employee-earnings/latest-release\)](#)
- [Working arrangements \(/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/working-arrangements/latest-release\)](#)

- [Labour hire workers \(/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/labour-hire-workers/latest-release\)](#)

Trade union membership over time

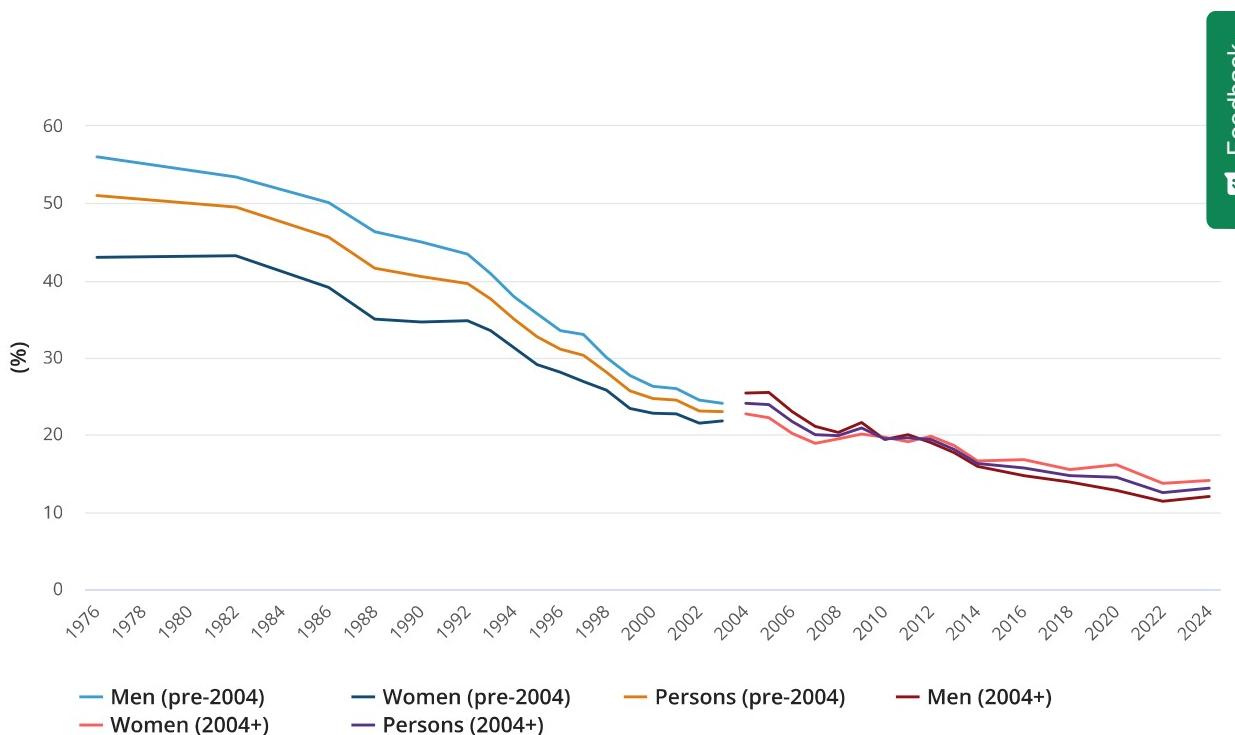
Of the 12.1 million employees in August 2024, 1.6 million (13.1%) were a member of a trade union in their main job, which is an increase from August 2022 (12.5%). This is the first increase in the rate of trade union membership since 2011.

Trade union membership has generally declined since 1992. From 1992 to 2024, the proportion of employees who were trade union members has fallen from 40% to 13% (from 43% to 12% for men and 35% to 14% for women).

Trade union membership was more common amongst full-time employees (14%) than part-time employees (11%).

Trade union membership tends to increase with age. In August 2024 only 3.7% of employees aged 15-19 years and 7.3% aged 20-24 were trade union members. This increased to 21% for employees aged 60-64 and 20% for employees aged 55-59 and 65-69.

Trade union membership by sex - 1976 to 2022



Feedback

Data for 1976-1988 sourced from

Duration of trade union membership

The majority of employees who were trade union members in August 2024 had been a trade union member for 5 years or more (66%).

Duration of trade union membership

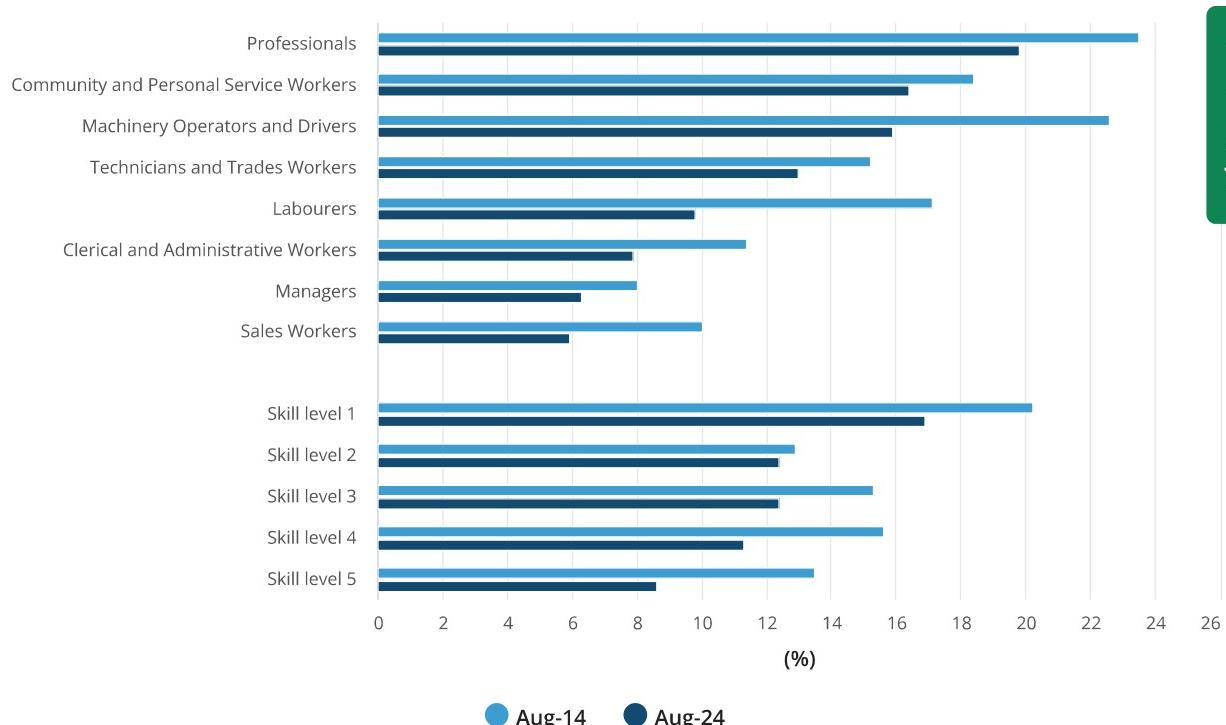
| | Fewer than 5 years ('000) | 5 years or more ('000) | Total ('000) |
|---------|---------------------------|------------------------|--------------|
| Males | 241.7 | 484.6 | 726.3 |
| Females | 297.7 | 555.6 | 853.3 |
| Persons | 539.4 | 1,040.2 | 1,579.6 |

Occupation

The occupations which recorded the highest proportion of employees who were trade union members were:

- Professionals (20%)
- Community and Personal Service Workers (16%)
- Machinery operators and drivers (16%)

Trade union membership, by occupation and skill level



Feedback

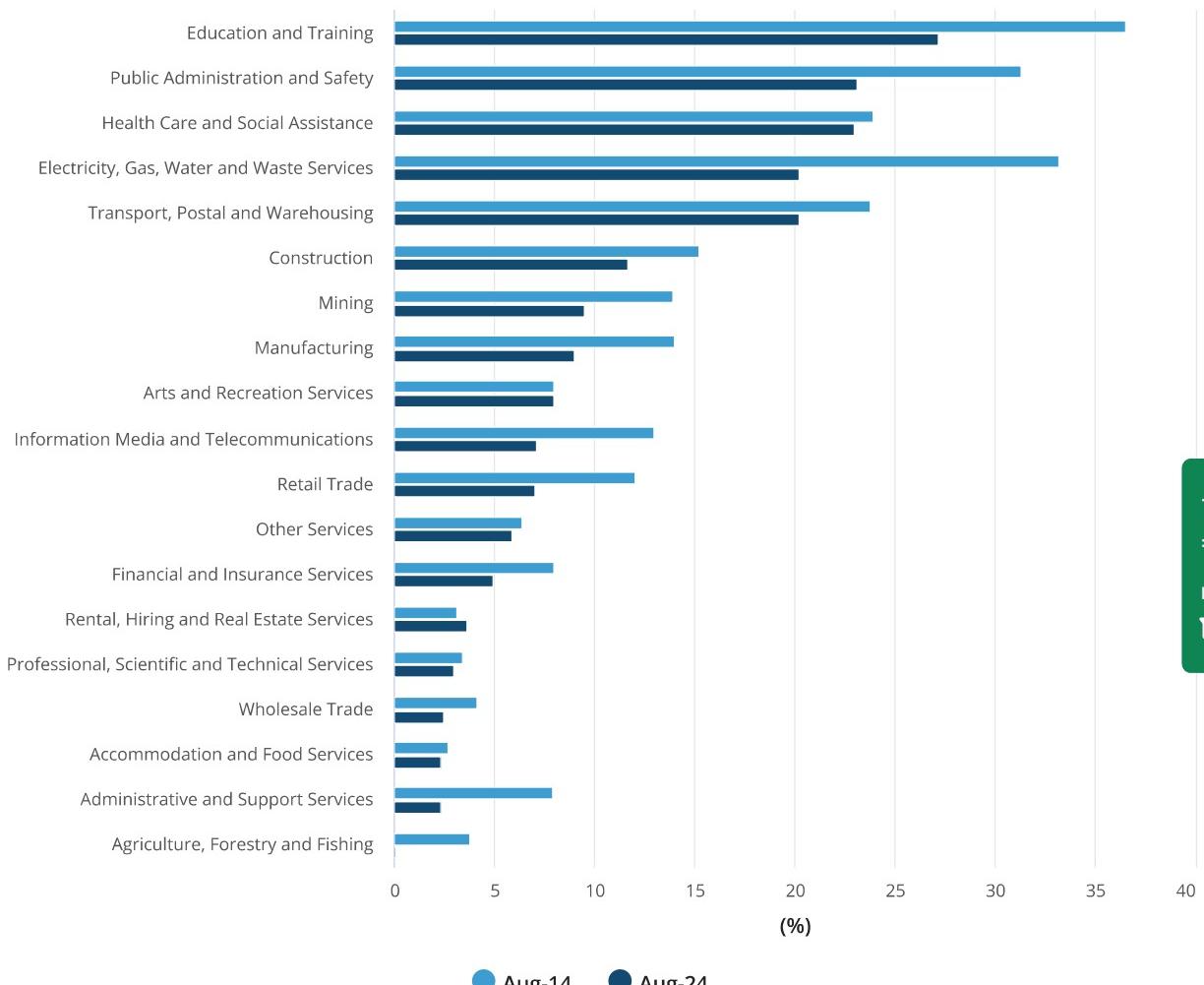
Data is coded to ANZSCO ver 1.2. For more information on Occupations and Skill level, refer to [ANZSCO - Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations](https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/allprimarymainfeatures/4AF138F6DB4FFD4BCA2571E200096BAD?opendocument) (<https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/allprimarymainfeatures/4AF138F6DB4FFD4BCA2571E200096BAD?opendocument>).

Industry

The industries with the highest proportion of employees who were trade union members were:

- Education and training (27%)
- Public administration and safety (23%)
- Health care and social assistance (23%)

Trade union membership, by industry



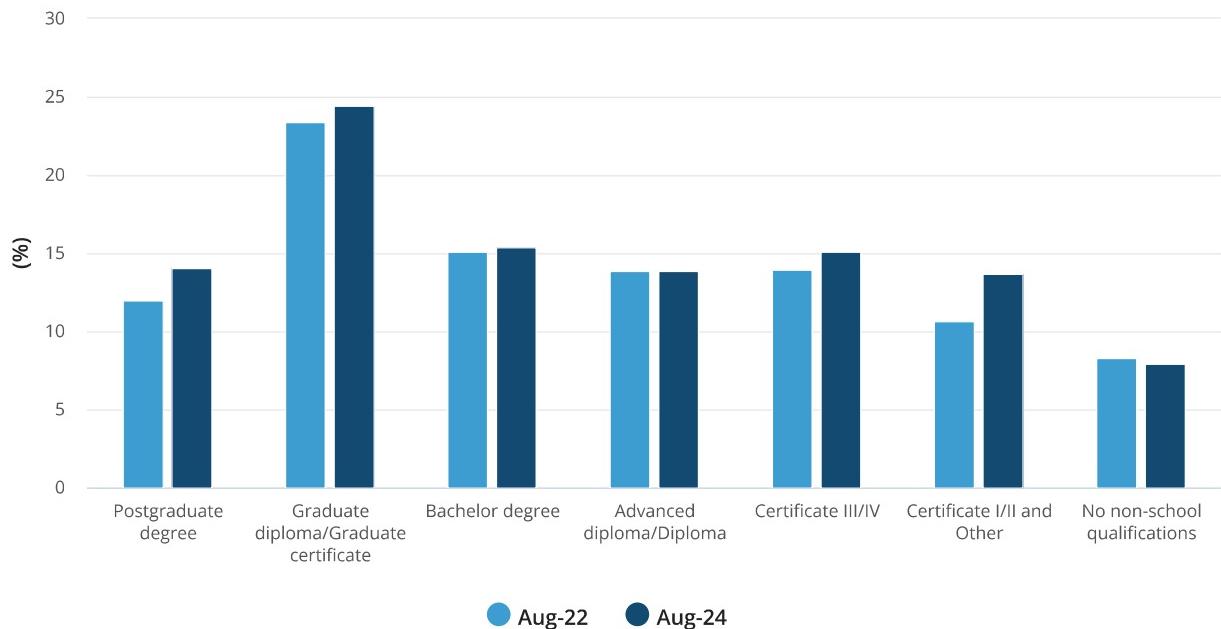
Feedback

For more information on Industries, refer to [Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification \(ANZSIC\) \(<https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/1292.0>\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/1292.0).

Educational attainment

Trade union membership was considerably more prevalent for employed people with a Graduate diploma or Graduate certificate (24%), than for other qualifications. Trade union membership was lowest amongst those without non-school qualifications (8%).

Trade union membership, by educational attainment



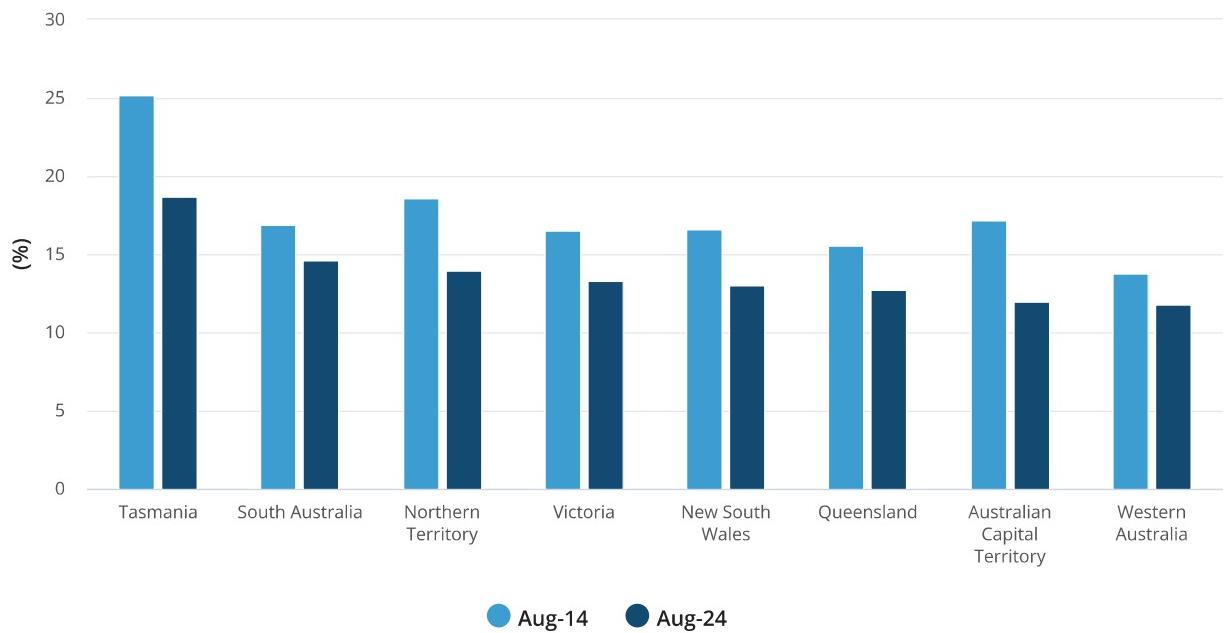
For more information on educational attainment, refer to [Australian Standard Classification of Education \(ASCED\) \(<https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/1272.0>\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/1272.0).

Feedback

States and territories

Tasmania had the highest proportion (19%) of employees who were trade union members, while Western Australia had the lowest (12%).

Trade union membership, by state and territory

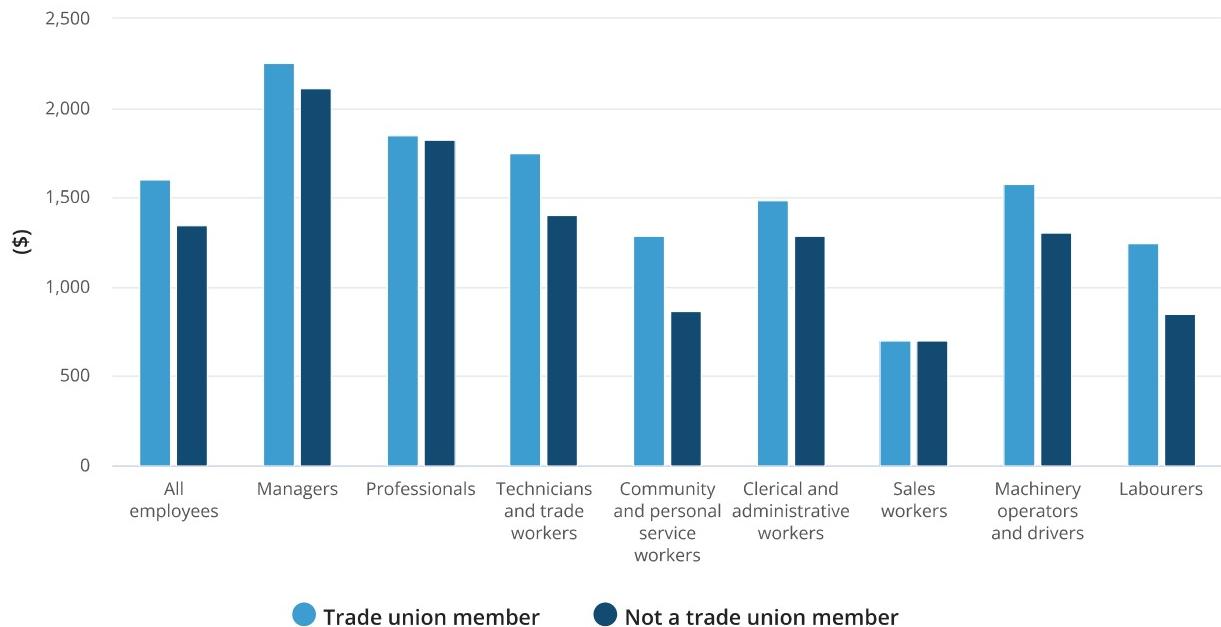


Earnings

The median weekly earnings in main job for employees who were trade union members in their main job was \$1,600 per week, compared with \$1,349 for employees who were not a trade union member.

Feedback

Median weekly earnings in main job, by trade union membership in main job



Job characteristics

Of employees who were trade union members, only 6% did not have paid leave entitlements.

[Feedback](#)

Trade union membership, by job characteristics

| | Trade union member in main job | | Not a trade union member in main job | | Total employees | |
|--|--------------------------------|-----|--------------------------------------|-----|-----------------|-----|
| | '000 | % | '000 | % | '000 | % |
| Without paid leave entitlements | 99.7 | 6% | 2,245.4 | 23% | 2,610.0 | 22% |
| Less than 12 months in main job | 167.9 | 11% | 2,131.6 | 22% | 2,509.8 | 21% |
| Does not expect to remain in main job for next 12 months | 117.5 | 7% | 1,018.6 | 11% | 1,210.3 | 10% |
| Not guaranteed a minimum number of weekly hours | 133.0 | 8% | 1,874.6 | 20% | 2,180.5 | 18% |

Total employees also includes persons who stated that they 'did not know' whether they were a Trade union member.

Data downloads

Trade union membership

[Download all \(4.54 MB\)](#)

Table 1 - Median earnings by full-time or part-time, state and trade union members in main job

[Download XLSX](#)

[220.17 KB]

Table 2 - Median earnings for employees by trade union membership

[↓ Download XLSX](#)

[3.3 MB]

Table 3 - Median earnings for employees by duration (length) of current trade union membership

[↓ Download XLSX](#)

[1.18 MB]

Microdata and TableBuilder

August 2024 Characteristics of Employment data will be released in [Tablebuilder \(/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/tablebuilder\)](#) and microdata in ABS [DataLab \(/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/datalab\)](#) (as a supplementary file for the [Longitudinal Labour Force \(/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/available-microdata-tablebuilder/longitudinal-labour-force-australia\)](#) (LLFS) microdata) on 19 December 2024. For more information, refer to [Microdata and TableBuilder: Characteristics of Employment \(/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/available-microdata-tablebuilder/characteristics-employment-australia\)](#).

Previous catalogue number

This release uses ABS catalogue number 6335.0.

Methodology

[Characteristics of Employment, Australia methodology, August 2024](#)